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[We give here one half of an article, the concluding part of which we shall print in our next number ; and we think our readers will all join us in the wish that we may hear again from so excellent a contributor. No additions to the literature of education are in our judgment more valuable than such records of actual experience, particularly when they are made by so competent and so admirable an observer.]

## EXPERIENCES.

MY DEAR FRIEND :

You ask my opinion as to what should be learned by children under eight years of age, and wish to have my personal experience in the matter, although you know that that has been very limited. Indeed it is only during the last year and a half that I have taught children so young, my teaching before that time having been, as I believe you know, of girls from eight and nine to fifteen years old. I do not see that I can answer your question better than by telling you just what I have been doing with my little class, as I am well satisfied with the results so far, and am inclined to think that though there may be other theories as good as mine, or better, yet this is *one* way, and a good one. At least it has proved interesting both to teacher and children.

My class, when I began with it, in October, 1864, consisted of about half a dozen children, mostly girls, between six and seven years old. All knew their letters, and could read a little, only two, however, with any readiness, even the smallest words; and they were the only ones, I believe, who could print at all. Of course they knew nothing else of school studies, and none of them had been to school or had had any systematic teaching. I began with one session of three hours, and have not increased it. Probably next year I shall add another hour, and give more recess.

My first object was, and is, to make them *love school*; and that not by making a mere amusement of it,—for they love play already, and little would be gained by giving them only another form of play,—but by making the acquisition of knowledge delightful to them. For this, of course, the first requisite was an *atmosphere of happiness* in the school-room; and I believe this is very much more within the teacher's control than teachers generally understand. A bright expression of face, a *cheery* voice, a look of sympathy with the children, as if you were on *their side*, and enjoying their presence and pursuits—these things put the teacher in such a relation with them as will go very far towards making them feel exactly as she would have them, and like to do just what she wants them to do. I should quite like to enlarge on this point to you, as I believe its importance cannot be over-estimated; but you asked what a child can and should be taught, and will not thank me for straying off on side questions, however interesting.

Of course the first thing was the reading, and its invariable accompaniments, spelling and writing, which I believe should begin and continue with it. A child can form a letter on the slate and blackboard as soon as he can recognize its form at sight, and can arrange the letters of a word from memory as soon as he can read the word. With regard to the much vexed question of *how* children should be taught to read, I have little experience, and I am inclined to think that a great deal of breath is wasted on the subject by the advocates of the various systems. All children learn to read, and I suppose no way is so stupid and unphilosophical that it will prevent a child's learning. Even the old fashioned method of naming each separate letter first, though so much berated by modern sys-

tem-makers of all kinds, has the undeniable vantage ground of long experience in its favor—we all learned in that way, and what children have done, children may do. Still there are, no doubt, quicker and pleasanter, if not more efficacious methods, and without going into the details of the different methods, I may say, for my own part, that I think no rational teacher will be bigoted in the use of any one to the exclusion of all others. The eclectic system, however to be reprobated in medicine, is essential in teaching. But you want my practice, not my theory. When I began with this class all knew a little of reading, as I said; but one I had taught from the beginning, and I will tell you how. I had for years believed in teaching by the sounds of the letters, not their names, my attention being first called to the subject in 1848, by a little primer printed by Dr. Kraitsir, in which the lessons were arranged on that principle. Remembering this, when two years ago, or rather less, I wanted to teach a little fellow just six years old, I bought for the purpose Miss Peabody's First Lessons, prepared in the same manner. But I found it altogether unsatisfactory, and I am quite sure that it is based on a wrong principle, in assuming the Italian sounds of the vowels as a foundation, a principle which necessitates such violations of pronunciation as to render whole series of examples worthless. So I threw the book aside. While deliberating as to the best thing to do next, and after elaborating quite in detail a plan of reading lessons, based on our simple short and long vowel sounds, I saw an advertisement of Mr. Zachos' Phonic Reader. I got a copy, and finding to my great satisfaction that his theory of sounds was the same as my own, I set to work with great zeal to indoctrinate my young pupil. I taught him the whole alphabet, *by sound* merely, and then proceeded regularly with the reading lessons. Everything worked to a charm—he was very much interested, and made rapid progress. But Mr. Zachos' senseless sentences were too much at last for even our enthusiasm; and though he told us distinctly to read with great expression, and bring out the meaning of each sentence, we found this so difficult and sometimes so impossible a task that we were quite discouraged, and after reading continually fewer sentences in each lesson, we at last merely read the columns of words at the head, and so slipped easily through the

book. When I began with the class this boy read as well as the best among them, and could always, and can still find out *new words* more easily than any. In spelling, he is generally behind those who learned in the arbitrary way; he finds it more difficult to commit to memory the words that are not spelled as they are pronounced, and in writing from dictation a lesson that has not been studied, he makes, perhaps, more mistakes than the others, though he never, as they do, writes a word so that it does not pronounce rightly; but his spellings are *phonic*, if often ludicrously wrong.

I put the class at once upon the sounds of the letters, and I should never teach reading without making that the principal basis, however I might vary the teaching in other respects. I may as well tell you here of the only other child I have taught from the beginning, a little girl of scarcely five, who began with me this winter. I took the first of Willson & Callkins' Charts, having single words and a picture by each word. Those containing the short vowel sounds only are as follows:

cap,	hen,	dog,	cup,
cat,	egg,	ox,	jug,
bat,	nest,	box,	duck,
lambs,	red,	fox,	drum.

You see there is no short *i* — that list is by itself and I could not use it because it contained double consonants and other combinations that should not be given so early. This list as it stands does not present a very good selection of words as you will readily see, but it has the merit of being free from any soft *c*'s and *g*'s, or other consonant perplexities, and it contains every letter in the alphabet except *q*, *v*, *w*, *y* and *z*. It might as well have had these. Well, I taught these words to my little girl, by the aid of the accompanying pictures, at the same time making her divide each into its component sounds, *c* (hard of course,) *ā t*, &c., till she knew each word pretty well, even when I covered the picture, though I was by no means sure that she would recognize them in any other place. This was the work of only three or four lessons. Then, just to try her, I took the alphabet, in order, and pointing to each letter, asked her its sound. She looked at *a*, and I heard her say



to herself "c ã," and then "ã" aloud. b, "that's the first letter in bat," she said, and gave the sound. And so through them all. Some of them she hesitated longer over, especially those that occurred but once, or only in the latter words that we had not studied quite so thoroughly. But I believe she thought them out in every instance, aided undoubtedly by a faculty of picturing things before her mind's eye, which has always been marked in her. She saw the columns, and each word in its place, almost as distinctly as if the chart were still before her, and hunted over them for the desired letter till she came to it. She puzzled for a long time over m. At last she exclaimed, "Oh, there it is, the very last letter of all, in dwum," for she couldn't quite roll her r's then, and is not very skilful yet. She read after that a good many columns in Zachos, and I wrote sentences on the blackboard for her, giving her constantly new sounds, and then put her into Sheldon's First Reading Lessons, which she has read about half through. If you have occasion to use such a book, I advise you by all means to get it; it is far prettier than Hillard's or Sargent's, and is only rivalled in my recollection by "Little Crumbs," a charming little English reading book, which it very much resembles.

But when I began with my class, I knew no Sheldon, and took Sargent's Primary, which we followed with Hillard's Second, and then Hillard's Third, which we read more than half through before the middle of July brought the summer vacation. In September we began again, and are now in Hillard's Fourth Reader. They read and spell every day, their spelling lessons as such being recited *viva voce*, as by far the quickest method. But they write a great deal on their slates and on the blackboard, and of course that is a constant exercise in spelling. They printed only until May, when they were taught the writing letters, each separately, and now they write quite respectably on slates or paper. They have never had ink, but copy with a pencil into a blank book every week some lesson, either of their own composition or written from dictation, which they have prepared on their slates. They like this very much; it is a more permanent monument of their industry and progress, and can be carried home to receive the sympathy and approbation always ready for them there. A very good and pleas-

ant exercise I find the writing from memory of the poetry that they learn once a week, and they have learned to divide the lines and put in the capitals and punctuation excellently. It is not worth while to enter into any more detail on these points; the variety of modes of interesting children in reading, writing and spelling is absolutely endless, and your ingenuity will suggest as many as mine. Indeed, you will soon find that ingenuity, if not one of the most important qualifications of a teacher, is one of those most frequently required.

The reading lessons are always accompanied by lessons in the analysis of sounds, which I vary in form almost every day; and in spelling they are constantly called on to notice the silent letters, the vowel sounds, the different ways of producing the same sounds, or the different sounds produced in the same way, etc., etc. All these things are simply matters of course when one's attention is once drawn to them. I must tell you that reading, spelling and poetry are the only lessons these children *study*; and even they were only begun as studies during the last quarter of the first year. Even now, I am not very strict about the spelling, unless I have seen a disposition to idleness (the unpardonable sin in our busy community), but generally have a misspelled word corrected by another pupil, then spelled in concert by the class, and then by the delinquent.

A. B. W.

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### ENGLISH UNIVERSITY EDUCATION.

Sketches from Cambridge, by a Don. Reprinted from the Pall Mall Gazette. London and Cambridge: Macmillan & Co. 1865.

If it were not for the bad reputation that all works on the subject of education have with publishers, we presume that this exceedingly amusing and instructive little book on English university life, would long ago have been reprinted. It is not often that we get such a frank exposé of the short-comings of English education from one who is so competent to describe it as our Cambridge "Don." As the book is not likely to fall into the hands of many of our readers, we propose to entertain them with some extracts from it.

"The world may be divided," the Don begins, "into those who have, and those who have not received a university education. With regard to the latter I can only repeat the remark said to have been originally applied to the small colleges by a member of Trinity College, Cambridge. "They, too, are God's creatures," — and proceeds to say that though Tom Brown has given us a glimpse of Oxford, as seen from an undergraduate's point of view, and Cuthbert Bede has set forth in *Verdant Green*, certain caricatures which represent the current popular myths of student life, yet, neither these nor other more ambitious attempts give the whole truth. He therefore proposes to steal a little time from that occupation which all resident fellows are presumed to be engaged in, namely, the "collecting with a view to beginning, at some future day, to set about concocting a new edition of a not very favorite classical author," to describe some of the features of university life at Cambridge. We pass over two capital chapters on the rowing man and athletic sports, noting only that he pronounces the description of the boat-race in *Tom Brown at Oxford* "the best of all possible or actual descriptions — the one passage in the book which is really inimitable," and proceed to the chapter on mathematics, the leading study at Cambridge.

"A transition" he says, "from physical to intellectual exercise may appear somewhat violent. If I do not mistake however, there is a closer analogy than might at first sight be evident between the directions taken by our muscular and our cerebral energy. To go no further, we expend a great deal of both upon objects intrinsically useless and moreover their uselessness is often put forward as a recommendation. . . . Nothing can be less generally useful than cricket except mathematics. . . . Of course certain branches of mathematics have a direct bearing upon practical life, and for anything I know there is something besides amusement to be gained even in the abstruse recesses where the high priests of mathematics utter mysterious sentences in a tongue not understood by the vulgar. But the true enthusiast rejects and scorns the application of any test of practical utility. Knowledge he thinks is knowledge; the more remote it is from all contact with concrete things the better; the special merit of mathematics is that you can sit in

your own room and spin it like a spider out of your own inside without ever even looking out of the window. . . .

"As an amusement it is first-rate. A man may spend a happy life in investigating extravagant formulæ, and in exhausting all the letters of all known alphabets to express his discoveries. So he may in playing whist, in solving chess problems, or unravelling Indian puzzles. As an intellectual toy, mathematics is far ahead of any known invention."

We hand over this estimate of mathematical studies to the tender mercies of our mathematical friends. As an estimate of certain styles of mathematical study, we cannot help thinking it eminently just. Our author then gives a description of the famous "Union" debating club, touches upon the "Tractarian" youths who set up "oratories" in their coal-closets, and upon the type of hero partially represented in *Guy Livingston*, the audacious youth who shows his spirit in getting drunk and fighting bargees,—“a variety who in reality differs from his picture as much as the dirty drunken Red Indian of real life differs from the Red Indian of Fennimore Cooper's novels.” He then proceeds to the class to whom he himself belongs, the “Dons,” the college officials and other resident Fellows, that is.

“It may be improper to draw an elaborate parallel between toads and Dons, further than to remark that with an unpromising exterior they both sometimes bear a precious jewel in their heads: but I certainly never heard of the toad whose toes have grown long, and whose mouth has been closed by a prolonged sojourn in a rock, without thinking of some of my University friends. They, like the toad, have absorbed a certain local coloring; some of their faculties have become cramped from long disuse; and as the shape of the toad's domicile might be inferred from an inspection of his person, so I fancy that I can distinguish in some men not only the University, but even the particular college to which they have belonged. In one figure I can distinctly trace the marks left by a chapel of pure mediæval architecture; in another I can make out the influence of a lawn, admirably adapted for croquet; and without being hypercritical, the contour of a third speaks to me with irresistible force of a certain excellent college kitchen and cellar.”

Certain varieties of the “don” are then discussed. We extract the description of the rooms of a “poll coach,” a private tutor, that is, who devotes himself to the labor of putting stupid or idle



undergraduates, who are not candidates for a degree (technically the "*polloi*"), through the necessary examinations, by dint of cramming.

"The rooms in which the trade is carried on, give you some picture of the occupant's mind. A huge sheet of paper, pinned against the wall, contains the evidences of the Christian religion, reduced, like portable soup, to a small compass. It is to be hoped that it is not used as stock for making sermons. Two or three mechanical toys stand upon the table; for a "poll" man having a general impression that a thing in a book corresponds to nothing in earth or heaven (the last is specially unlikely), shows an almost infantile delight at the sight of a real pulley or inclined plane. The one-ounce weight, it is true, does not accurately balance the six, as the book says it should; but the "coach" has judiciously secured equilibrium by inserting a surreptitious pin into the mechanism. Certain manuscript books on the table, contain the results of boiling down human knowledge into shreds and patches; for the "poll coach" is ready to prepare his pupils for any known pass examination: if they give him a day's start to learn it, he will teach them Sanskrit, Chaldee, or German metaphysics.

You find, therefore, mechanical propositions written in the fewest possible words, lists of the heretics and their tenets, a short account of the Reformation, a statement of the four causes which make the division of labor desirable, and of the three causes of the economical disadvantages of slavery, pet translations of classical fragments, with marks against noted pitfalls, a short history of the German tribes, &c., besides various other information at which my knowledge does not enable me even to hint.

Like other artists, the "poll coach" learns to take a pride in his work. He looks upon a refractory youth with the feelings of a Rarey regarding Cruiser. The "poll" youth is shy of any instructor, much as that redoubtable beast had an aversion for grooms. . . . The object of the "coach" is first to fix him down in his workshop, and then go through the exhausting process of assiduously hammering knowledge into a fool. The most distressing case is where a man's mind is so constructed as to contain five subjects at once, but not six. I have known a youth of this kind who was plucked seven times for his Little Go, (pass examination), and every time plucked in only one subject. Once he succeeded in everything but Euclid; another time he got up his Euclid and forgot his Scripture history; a third time he managed both of these but failed in his Greek Testament. He was like a child trying to pick up six marbles, when his hand was only big enough to hold five.

Of this sort of cramming he says in another place:

"Undergraduates, like school-boys, consider their teachers to be beings animated by a mysterious malevolence. They may be good natured by occasional impulses, but their main object is to enforce a compliance with certain mysterious rites, which are recommended by nothing but their own arbitrary will and pleasure. A man does not understand why he should get up Scripture history, any more than why he should stand upon his head and repeat abracadabra

seventy times running. The essential peculiarity of this art is, to save intellectual exertion to the learners. The propositions to be learnt are eviscerated of all meaning, and then, like preserved meats, packed into the smallest possible formula, to be repeated by rote. I vaguely recollect a scripture history put into rhyme, of which the only verse that sticks by me, is this:

Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, son of Jephunneh,  
Were the only two  
Who ever got through  
To the land of milk and honey.

It is a cardinal principle of judicious cramming to try the memory rather than the intelligence. I have known several youths who carried this so far, as to start upon the apparently desperate undertaking of learning Euclid by heart, rather than understand its propositions. If you endeavor to explain a difficulty, the invariable answer is, "Don't bother me with explanations; I will get it up, but I am not going to understand it." The smallest change of conditions such as altering letters in a mathematical formula, is generally enough to upset this intelligent class.

I should not be just if I did not add that efforts are being made to improve this state of things. I hope they may be successful. Meanwhile it will perhaps be evident why I said a few pages back that some people thought the intellectual training of the captain of a boat club better than that which he receives from the "poll." It requires much exertion of common sense and judgment, whereas the "poll" only requires a trifling effort of memory. Moreover, the things thus learnt, naturally run off a man's mind like water off a duck's back, and on looking at them impartially, I am much inclined to think it is the best thing they can do.

The Scotch schoolmaster whom we quoted in a former number, and who is now Professor of Greek in Queen's College, Galway, in an entertaining tract he did us the favor to send us, wherein he compares the old English Universities with their younger sisters, English, Scotch, and Irish, says, speaking of events that occurred within a very few years, —

"The degrees of the old College were ludicrously easy of attainment, like the degrees of her venerable English sisters. I could tell of a skilful tutor passing pupils in Dublin through in astronomy with two lessons of half-an-hour each; two hearty shoves, and the lads were out of peril. I myself, in my last term of undergraduateship at Cambridge, pushed a friend through a pass degree, by dinning into his head, over coffee and cigars, the contents of a difficult book of Thucydides. My friend read English polysyllables with an effort, and Greek characters with a feeling of tribulation; of tribulation to himself and to his hearer. But he was a good fellow, had been three time plucked, had a living waiting for him, and a pretty country-cousin ready to leap into his arms the

moment that he passed. It was the latter fact that touched me most, and made me so sympathetic and energetic, and successful a teacher. He passed, as passed Marmion out of the stronghold of the Douglas—

"To pass he had such scanty room,  
The bars descending razed his plume."

In the generation preceding my own, a pass might be obtained in mathematics at Cambridge by a short and trifling written examination, and by answering one of three *vivâ voce* questions. I knew of a case, where a student was prepared for this latter ordeal with one to him utterly unintelligible sentence: "*Variatur, Domine, ut SP inversum quadratum.*" He gave the mystic sentence in reply to his first and second question, and heard in each instance the fatal words: "*Non ita, domine:*" "*Non ita, domine.*" But something touched the heart of that examiner, at the sight of an ingenuous youth sailing into ecclesiasticism upon so slender a raft of science, and he gave the question to which the above sentence served as answer, and the student passed, but to the day of his decease was ignorant of the wording of his examiner's question, or the meaning of his own reply."

The "polloi," as the name indicates, compose the majority of the undergraduates; and certainly no descriptions of the education given to this multitude of young men, can be more unfavorable even making all allowances for jocular exaggeration, than these of men who have had the best means of knowing what it really is. Our Don says:

"When the intelligent foreigner of fiction expresses his surprise at our English devotion to classics and mathematics, the answer that is invariably thrown at his head is, that their minds are thereby strengthened and prepared for dealing with other subjects. Your students, he says, are kept hard at work till twenty-one, upon matters which nine-tenths of them have utterly forgotten at thirty. They have been filling their minds pertinaciously with a lumber which is only to be consigned to vaults and cellars. Ought they not rather to be supplied with some useful stock in trade for future life? What can be the use of keeping them grinding at this mental tread-mill which is actually recommended by the inutility of its products? Ah, we reply, see how it strengthens the prisoner's thews and sinews. When we once let them out there is no nut which they won't be able to crack, and no work which they won't find easy by comparison. We teach classics and mathematics because they are the best of all mental gymnastics. They strengthen the intellectual faculties as lifting weights and jumping bars strengthen the muscles. If asked why they are the best, we appeal to "all experience"—an appeal to experience being a well-known method of at once refusing to argue, and looking preternaturally wise."

The real motives for keeping up the antiquated course he thinks are rather complicated. The gymnastic theory enters into them,

but "is more of a pretext than a determining cause." It bears much the same relation to the system that the pretext of the necessity of keeping up the breed of horses bears to the system of horse-racing, and the real motives are in both cases pretty much the same.

"The predominating desire is, of course, to win money, and that is precisely the desire which animates our under-graduates. They wish indeed to win glory too; but as the measure of glory is the amount it will fetch in the Church or at the Bar, it comes to very much the same thing. A Fellowship may be reckoned as worth £2,500, on an average. The prospect of taking pupils or winning a professorship may be calculated as worth at least as much more. It may thus be said that a man who can secure a high place in either of our two great Triposes [i. e., classical and mathematical examinations] wins at least £5,000 in money. . . . Though Adam Smith tells us, that, in the long run, foundations depress the reward of learned men by artificially increasing the supply, the particular cases are pleasant. The effect, however, upon our system of education is a more difficult matter to appreciate, and is less often remarked.

"Nobody comes to the University to learn. If that is too strong a statement, I may at least say that no one comes with a view to learning chiefly. . . . Indeed it is perfectly obvious that nothing can be more absurd than to make five hundred young men (about the annual number of freshmen) give up three years to reading classics or mathematics for their own sake. Perhaps fifty of them may be improved by such a discipline. As for the remainder, nothing but custom could persuade parents or sons that the best use to be made of the three years after eighteen is to make ignorant youths into third-rate classics or mathematicians, especially as they are immediately to forget all about it. The 'gymnastic' theory, as applied to those below the first class, is a mere farce. . . .

"For those who take to the training kindly, and reach the top of the tree, it is a very different question. For them I fully believe our intellectual training to be excellent, though even for them it would, but for the endowments, be rather an expensive luxury. It is rather a severe tax upon any man's time and brains, to spend three precious years, not in learning something, but in learning to learn something. I repeat however, that for those who become really proficient I believe the polish attained to be worth the trouble of attaining it."

We greatly doubt it. "Polish" is a good thing, and very essential perhaps to the idle members of an aristocratic caste; but for anybody else to choose an education simply for the "polish" it gives, is to choose show instead of substance, veneering in place of solid wood. And how absurd to argue that an education in two dead languages is the *only* mental training that can give polish, if by polish is meant, as should be meant, refinement of mind and cor-



rectness of taste! Porson and Bentley, the greatest of English classical scholars, were charming specimens of "polish"!

We wish our space allowed us to continue our quotations, and particularly to give an account of those awful personages, the "Heads of Houses," and the manner of their appointment. Allowance of course must be made for the humorous extravagance of some of our author's statements, but with all these deductions, the witty and entertaining, but far from flattering picture he gives of the antiquated English system of university education, contains, we believe, much more truth than its bigoted adherents on this or the other side of the water would at all care to acknowledge. — [Ed.]

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### STEPS IN OUR SCHOOL REFORM.

[The following article, by a respected friend, who has taken for many years a warm interest in the cause of public education, and has been, and still is officially connected in important positions with our schools, and who was himself a member of the Legislature of 1827, of which he speaks, will be read, we think, with interest, both by our older and by our younger readers. We hope to be able to continue his reminiscences in a future number.]

In view of the encouraging condition of our public schools in Massachusetts, and the decided progress they have made during the last quarter of a century, a natural curiosity has been awakened in the minds of many friends of education, to trace, if they could, the agencies by which this has been accomplished. It has been ascribed by some to this man, and by some to that; and many have been disposed to consider a state of things as the fruits of individual effort, which might readily be traced to causes which had already prepared the public mind for action, and only waited for some one to give the first impulse.

It is due to the cause of education itself, as much as to the memories of those who were the early actors in bringing about the reform which we are witnessing, to record, as far as may be, the processes by which the public mind was first aroused to the subject

of our schools, and the people were educated up to a proper estimate of what they owed to themselves and to those who were to come after them. It is in no measure detracting from the credit due to any one man for his services in this cause, to refer in proper terms to what others have done in the same field of labor.

Indeed, it is little short of preposterous to suppose that any one man could have built up by his own efforts, in any one life, the admirable system which we now enjoy. That system is not the work of our day, nor of any man or men who have lived in our day. It goes back for its origin, to the remarkable men who planted Massachusetts. And it is not too strong language to say, there is nothing which claims our admiration in the policy and efficiency of our plan of educating all of every class as an element of moral power in the Commonwealth, which is not embodied in the idea, with which the fathers of New England founded the system of free schools. The idea may not have been fully developed at once. But the principle of action which animates the system to-day, is detected in the very first act of legislation which opened the doors of the school-house, while the path to it lay through the tangled forest.

Various causes had combined to prevent its full influence being felt. The colonists were poor, and had to struggle hard to maintain the life of the colony. The long contest in which they were engaged with the Indians and the French, was followed by that of the Revolution, which exhausted their resources, and withdrew their attention from everything which did not supply direct aid and support to a cause in which their energies were so severely taxed. Everybody knows that the Peace of '83 found this, as all the other Colonies, though Independent States, bankrupt in wealth, with their trade and commerce ruined, without credit and without the aid of an efficient Federal Government in retrieving her disastrous fortunes. In 1789, the legislature of Massachusetts took up the subject of free schools, and passed the act of that year "to provide for the instruction of youth, and for the promotion of good education." In that, provision is made for District and Grammar Schools, in the latter of which were to be taught the Latin, Greek and English Languages, and penalties are imposed upon towns failing to comply with the requirements of the Statute.

It charged as a duty, upon the preachers of the gospel, and the selectmen of the towns, to promote the interests of these schools, by personal effort, visitation and encouragement. And it required, on the part of the teachers, a certificate of fitness, from proper officers prescribed by the statute. But what, so far as moral effect was concerned, was of still greater importance, the act embodied the spirit of the Constitution, which had provided, as a vital principle of the government itself, for the university, and the encouragement of literature, in the following remarkable and significant terms :

"It is hereby made the duty of the President, Professors, and tutors of the University at Cambridge, preceptors and teachers of academies, and all other instructors of youth, to take diligent care, and to exert their best endeavors to impress on the minds of children and youth, committed to their care and instruction, the principles of piety, justice, and a sacred regard to truth, love to their country, humanity and universal benevolence, sobriety, industry and frugality, chastity, moderation and temperance, and those other virtues which are the ornament of human society, and the basis upon which the republican constitution is structured. And it shall be the duty of such instructors, to endeavor to lead those under their care, as their ages and capacities will admit, into a particular understanding of the tendency of the before mentioned virtues, to preserve and perfect a republican constitution, and to secure the blessings of liberty, as well as to promote their future happiness, and the tendency of the opposite vices, to slavery and ruin."

Here then was recorded and published throughout the Commonwealth, this noble testimony of the people, through their representatives, of the character, purposes and aims of the common school, and its essential and inseparable connection with the support and maintenance of our constitution and our liberties. Such a declaration, repeated as it was every time the statute was read in public or in private, could not fail to impress upon the public mind a respect for our institutions of learning, however much the people were themselves withdrawn from personal effort to sustain them, by their own pressing emergencies of business and personal need. We are to take into consideration, also, that not only were the

people of Massachusetts then poor, but in many of the towns the population was small and sparse. The whole population of the State at the time of the passage of that act, did not exceed 375,000, where there are now nearly a million and a half. With the few who were qualified to teach, and the small sums which the districts could or would pay their teachers, and the multiplication of academies which supplied, in a degree, the want of a better class of instruction, it is not surprising that the interest in these schools should have subsided in the public mind. Nor should we forget the effect of the war of 1812, upon the business interests of the Commonwealth, or that of the subsequent change in the direction of the industry and labor of the country. But the schools were not forgotten. Acts of legislation upon the subject, were passed, from time to time, and the several towns and districts complied with the forms, if not the spirit of the law, and the Commonwealth was dotted all over with school-houses which partook of the cheap and uncomfortable character which marked the farm-houses among which they were planted. There were, moreover, in almost every part of the State, here and there, teachers who engaged in the business from a love or aptitude for its duties, and kept alive in particular localities, an interest to sustain and encourage the schools which they taught.

When therefore, at last, the condition of the State had become such as to prepare the public mind to place its schools in the state of advancement to which its other interests had attained, a feeling grew up in various quarters in favor of doing something to revive and reform the system, so as more nearly to conform it to the changes through which the community had been passing. One of the places where this was witnessed, was the then town of Worcester. As the centre of a large community, the example of the town was felt in its influence upon the schools of the other towns in the county. We have a brief account of the changes wrought there, in the faithful and accurate history of the town, published many years since, by the late William Lincoln, Esq., to which we refer for many of our facts. The movement for reform began in 1823; and at the head of it were among others the venerable Dr. Bancroft, Rev. Dr. Going, Samuel M. Burnside, Esq., and the Hon. Levi



Lincoln, soon after Governor of the Commonwealth. Dr. Bancroft is remembered as a leading and influential member of the clerical profession every where known and respected. And the same may be said of Dr. Going who devoted great earnestness of purpose and an excellent judgment to the cause of education, and, after leaving Worcester, became the head of a literary institution in Ohio. Mr. Burnside was a lawyer, not only learned in his profession but distinguished for the interest which he retained in his classical studies. He took an early and active part in improving the condition of the schools of Worcester, was a Trustee with Dr. Bancroft and Gov. Lincoln, of Leicester Academy, and, as we shall see, had more than any other one to do in framing the school law of 1827. Through the efforts of these and other prominent gentlemen in Worcester, an act of the legislature was obtained in 1824, under which *a system of graded schools* was established, under the superintendence of a board of overseers. And for many years, there was an annual public holiday of the schools there, when the pupils assembled in a procession and proceeded to one of the churches where they listened to an address suited to the occasion, at which large numbers of their parents and other citizens attended, and gave to it much interest and importance. The effect upon the schools was most salutary, when such men as Dr. Bancroft, Dr. Going and Mr. Burnside were willing to prepare and deliver, as they did, addresses suited to the occasion.

The effect of the school law of 1827, and the part which Mr. Burnside took in its passage, deserve more than a passing notice. In our judgment it was the measure more than any other single act, which gave the first great impulse to the school reform in the State. Mr. Burnside was chairman of the committee in the House, who reported the bill. He was, at the time, a member of that body from Worcester. He devoted much time to the maturing of the bill, and few subjects, that winter, attracted more attention, or led to a more general discussion in the House. The truth was, the condition and wants of the schools had begun to be felt, and to excite attention and remark in the community. And the number in the House who were ready to offer and advocate amendments and modifications of the bill, led to a full canvass and discussion of

its merits. Without going into detail as to its provisions, it created boards of committees in towns, to have general charge of the schools therein; it provided for supplying books for the scholars by the towns, excluding everything of a sectarian character, and required these committees to make reports annually to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, of the number and condition of the schools, as well as the state of education generally, in the several towns. It embodied all the provisions of the school laws into a single act, and supplied what had been so much needed, the efficient means by which the system could be practically carried out. Not only was it an important step towards the better system which now prevails, but the discussions to which it gave rise, elicited the views of leading gentlemen from every part of the State, and awakened an interest in its schools which had lain so long dormant in most of the towns. Among those who took part in these discussions, we may mention Mr. Choate, then a member from Danvers, who, in his first speech in any legislative assembly, made upon one of the amendments offered to the original bill, gave an unmistakable earnest of that strength and brilliancy, which afterwards rendered him so eminently attractive and powerful as a debater. In tracing the steps by which the school reform has been begun and carried out, we regard the action in respect to this law, as among the first, and by no means the least important. It was ten years in advance of the creation of the Board of Education, and Mr. Mann did not become a member of the Legislature till the following session.

HISTORICUS.

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### HINTS TO TEACHERS OF READING.

"What method do you use for bringing out the voice?" is the question repeatedly asked of teachers in Reading, and by many would-be critics, by whom he who has most volume is accounted the best reader. I would by no means undervalue this important property of voice, but I would suggest that in devotion to this *adjunct* to expression we may lose sight of those minor graces, without which reading were "flat, stale, and unprofitable." We want

something more than a loud tone; we want naturalness, and all those niceties of vocal touch which give evidence of delicate perception and true taste. Bad reading is, in the main, caused by many little things, so little and so common that they individually escape our notice. That this is true has been proved in my experience with many classes fresh from the public schools. I find universally the same faults, which must be due either to the uncultivated ear of the teacher, or the pupil's blunt perception.

There is constraint in the manner of the reader, a fear of those who listen, which precludes all expression of feeling. A child who is taught to read at home is rarely troubled in that way. While he is in school, nothing effectual is done to encourage him to throw aside that timidity which naturally falls upon him in the company of so many strangers. The older the child, the harder the task of unfettering him. The example of a fine reader will loosen the first rivet. Place the picture of the poem, or prose sketch if it be such, before the "mind's eye" in a few, vivid, striking expressions; fire their souls with your enthusiasm, and, trust me, the chains will no longer be felt. The magnetism of the eye, still more the magnetism of voice, brings the class *en rapport* with yourself, and you may lead whither you will.

Another prominent fault is imperfect articulation. I do not mean that thickness of utterance which renders one difficult to be understood, but those careless slips from one word to another which destroy all dignity of expression, either by producing ludicrous combinations, or altering the movement of a line. The difficulty occurs most frequently with words which end in *s*, that letter being transferred to the next word, and doing duty for two. It occurs, also, in words which end in *t* or *ch*, when such words come before a vowel, as, "What a piece of work is man!" which is given in this form — "*Wha ta* piece of work, &c." "The sky | is changed; | and such | a change!" The rhythm of the line should be as marked: as usually read it becomes — "The sky | is changed; | and *su cha* change!" Order in the last two feet becomes chaos, and the sublimity of the scene vanishes in a breath. A very slight pause after the first word restores the harmony.

Occasionally a scholar reads in the minor key, a good thing in

its season, but one of which, like some other good things, it is possible to have too much. In such case, it is of no more use to begin the reforming work with the voice, than to attempt curing a sick person by applications to parts farthest removed from the seat of the disease. Watch the daily life, the mental action, in that scholar, and you will find everything written in the same key. Begin the work there. By encouragement, reasoning, persuasion, above all, by communicating cheerfulness, change the key of that child's thought and feeling, and the voice will not be slow in harmonizing.

Another thing to be watched is the use of the circumflex inflection. Except in rare instances of distinctive emphasis, it belongs to the expression of irony, raillery, and kindred emotions. But, in the expression of a contrast, pupils whose attention has not been called to the matter, will invariably indicate the contrasting words, by a circumflex, as, "I would rather play than read," instead of the honest up and down slides, — "I would rather play than read." I have found the most effectual way of remedying this, to be exaggerating the wrong inflection in such a way as to make it extremely ridiculous. The more undignified, the stronger the impression; then fix the right form by persistent repetition.

The worst fault to contend with, particularly with those who have no musical ear, is peculiar to prose reading. Through the long sentences, the voice at the end of each clause, and sometimes each phrase, is suspended between the level of the sentence and the cadence. It is an indescribable tone, a dropping of the voice not far enough for an inflection, and too far for anything corresponding in natural expression. It is a tantalizing sound, a sort of dismal holding on, without a touch of nature, acquired evidently by considering reading a mere mechanical exercise, in which certain sounds are to be given, and certain pauses made. The pupil must be induced to read as he would speak, and then he will break the monotony of the long sentences, by harmonic slides. It is this fault, more than any other, which makes prose reading so dull and lifeless.

These are some of the little things which we often forget to watch. I am tempted to add something about pronunciation, partly



for what I hope to receive in return. We have lately become alive to the fact that we were pronouncing a long list of words wrong, by reason of giving two strong accents, as *ter'-ri-to'-ry* for *ter'-ritory*, *dic'-tion-a'-ry* for *dic'-tionary*, *cir'-cum-stanc'-es* for *cir'-cumstances*, &c. We can manage the reform very comfortably in such words. It is comparatively easy to say *sec'-retary*, *per'-emptory*, &c., when the accented syllable is the second from the offending penult. But what can our Yankee tongues do with such words as *obligatory*, *judicatory*, and a host of others, in which the accented syllable is the *third* or *fourth* from the penult? Shall there be a secondary accent? I shall be thankful to any one who will free me from this perplexity.

F. A. R.

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Good reading is a rare attainment in our schools. Impressive reading superadds to this some degree of adaptation of the tone of voice to the character of the subject and of the style. Instead of it, we meet with a lifeless, drawling, monotonous style, by which the sense of the author is obscured, lost, or perverted. In such cases reading is a mechanical, not an intellectual process. We can scarcely call this an attainment. An ability to read to this extent can be of little benefit to the pupil; it will not induce him, after he has left school, to read for amusement or instruction. Before he will do this, reading must have ceased to be a task; he must have acquired the power of reading with fluency and intelligence. And if he does acquire this power, the benefit, great though it be to himself, as a means of intellectual advancement, will not be exhausted upon himself, but will extend to others. It is of great moment that as many as possible among the poor should be able to read aloud, so as to be well understood, and listened to with pleasure.

Every teacher is aware that to teach a pupil to read correctly and impressively, is no easy task. The reason is, that the power is the result, in a greater degree than in most branches of elementary teaching, of a combination of peculiar attainments.—*English Journal of Education.*

## Editor's Department.

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### DEATH OF PRESIDENT SPARKS.

Dr. Jared Sparks, late President of Harvard University, died in Cambridge on the 14th inst. We copy the following notice from the Boston Advertiser.

"Mr. Sparks was a native of Willington, Connecticut, and was a student of Phillips Exeter Academy, and a graduate of Harvard College in the class of 1815. In 1819 he was settled in the ministry at Baltimore, but impaired health compelling him to retire from the ministry, he returned to this vicinity and entered upon those pursuits which have made his name one of the most distinguished in our literary history. As the editor of the North American Review for several years, of the Library of American Biography, of the Works of Washington and Franklin, and of the Correspondence of the Revolution, and as professor and President of Harvard College, his name has for forty years been familiar in all that relates to the progress of letters and of historical research in the United States. At the close of the seventy-six years of his life he was able to point to such permanently valuable and important results of his long labor in the field of American history as dignify the record of no other writer. The most important work to be done in laying open the stores of the past for all scholars, present or future, had fallen to his lot, and he had performed it with such laborious and conscientious fidelity and critical discrimination as placed him confessedly at the head of his department of literary industry.

The close of life for this eminent man was tranquil and easy. His ripened years had seen his work finished, and were passed in the enjoyment of merited honor and respect, and of the affection of personal friends who recognized and loved a true heart. The fatal disease was not painful, and found him calmly awaiting the inevitable hour, which at his age could not be supposed to be far remote.

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### EDUCATIONAL LITERATURE.

We believe there are few subjects that could be named that have not been made a speciality in some one of our great public or private libraries, and on which somewhere a tolerably good collection of books,—sometimes a very perfect one,—cannot be found by the student desirous of investigating them. Heraldry, Angling, Shakspeare, Mesmerism, Ballad Poetry, great subjects and small, important or unimportant, almost every one has found some curious collector, willing to spend time and money in bringing together the books that were to be had upon it. It is a little singular that, so far at least as our public libraries are concerned, one of the most important of all subjects, that of

Education, should be, so far as we know, an exception to this rule. On this subject there is not in any of our public libraries even a tolerable collection of books to be found by the student who wishes to investigate either its history or its principles. The reason is easy to be found. Whatever we may say of modern progress, the fact is hardly yet recognized by the English and American mind, that there is any such thing as an art, much less a science of Education. In the minds of most men, even of scholars who call themselves enlightened, there still lingers the picture of the pedagogue of olden time, armed with birch and ferule, whipping the parts of speech into unwilling little boys. To them, teaching is still a mechanical trade, and all teachers, save perhaps here and there a Dr. Arnold, persons to be looked down upon, and ranked among the vulgar.

But the world moves, and elsewhere it has long been acknowledged that education is a science and teaching a liberal profession. One would think that it would not be difficult to prove the art which has for its object the development and training of the human faculties, to be something better than a base mechanical employment. It hardly needs much argument to show that there must be some interest in the question, how, in the various nations of the world, and through all the periods of past time, the problem of bringing up the next generation has been solved. Based as it must be upon psychology, intermingled closely with all other social, and even political problems, the true philosopher will be found to be the last man to despise it. And as a profound and interesting problem it has long been recognized in Germany. The philosopher Kant did not disdain to lecture on "pedagogics." The work of Fichte on the education of the German nation stirred the hearts of his fellow-countrymen to their depths, in the times of the liberation-war. The most genial of Germany's humorists has made education the subject of an admirable volume, and we might name more than one grave and learned history of education in the German language; while the philosophers, Herbart and Beneke, have raised up elaborate education-systems upon the foundation each of his peculiar philosophy. One would think, too, that the labors of Martin Luther, the application of the eighteenth century revolutionary doctrines to the subject made by Rousseau, the practical experiments of Pestalozzi, not to speak of English Milton and Locke, were enough to give a dignity to this neglected topic. It might be supposed, too, that the history of free schools in our own Republic, was a subject deserving of notice at the hands of our public book collectors.

Our thoughts were turned to the subject by examining the miscellaneous collection of volumes which represent the department of education in the, in most respects, admirably well appointed library of the Boston Athenæum. We do not know that it is any worse off in this department than its neighbors—in all, education is represented merely by the aggregate of such volumes as drift in, as it were, on the tide. Nowhere is any attempt made at completeness.

The above mentioned library, for instance, in its long list of foreign periodicals, does not include a single foreign educational journal. It does own, thanks to the efforts of its librarian, Mr. Poole, the well-known author of the *Index to Periodical Literature*, complete sets of the old American Annals, and Journal,

now so difficult to obtain, though it has only an incomplete set of the lectures of the American Institute; and how hard it is now to form a complete one, those know who have tried. We doubt if any library in the country, save the city Library of Boston, has a full set of the English Minutes and Reports; or that any save that of Brown University, whose President, Dr. Sears, is well acquainted with the value of German educational literature, has a copy of the great educational cyclopædia of Rost and Palmer. We should like to see a copy of John Brinsley's *Ludus Literarius*, with Bishop Hall's preface, published in 1627; but we doubt if America could furnish one; or of the famous work of the Middle Ages, *Le Castoiment*. We should like to see brought together that long list of books, mentioned the other day, in the *Edinburgh Review*, on the education of Idiots—a branch of the art of teaching of wide and extensive application. And somewhere we should like to see collected a long list of modern English works on the subject which we might name, but which only the fewest teachers can now-a-days afford to purchase.

We trust the time will come when the subject will not be treated with the neglect and almost contempt it is apt to meet with now, and when it will be thought worth while not only to gather together all works illustrating our own remarkable educational history—a field in which the Hon. Henry Barnard has done so much good service in his *Journal*—but to treat the subject as it deserves, as a science worthy of holding an honorable place in the Librarian's catalogue, and of drawing its fair share from his funds.

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#### GLEANINGS FROM EDUCATIONAL REPORTS.

We have to thank many friends, in all parts of the country, for kindness in favoring us with copies of State, City and Town Reports. No documents are more welcome, for they are the only means by which a journalist can keep himself acquainted with what is going on outside the narrow circle to which his own observation must be confined. We rarely examine a report, but we find some new fact or some valuable paragraph, and we propose to make it a part of our duties to lay before our readers, such passages from these documents, as seem interesting or noteworthy.

From the young State of Minnesota, and the far-off city of St. Paul, we get the Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Hon. D. BLAKELY, and like almost all the reports from our newer States, it shows how wide awake to the importance of the spread of sound popular education a portion at least of their citizens are, and also how much discouragement the friends of education have to encounter. The state of the common school system of Minnesota, seems to be by no means creditable. Great difficulties are encountered in procuring a sufficient supply of good teachers; but a Normal Training school is already in successful operation at Winona, and county superintendents are appointed all over the State, who are generally enabled to report some progress. The condition of the school-houses, however, seems to be



anything but satisfactory : — One superintendent reports that, though the value of his has been doubled during the past year, yet many of them are worth less than *ten dollars*, and one was valued at *three cents*, with some doubts as to whether that valuation was not too high. Mr. Blakely publishes in his report some very neat plans and elevations for country school-houses. Mr. Phelps, the principal of the Normal school, gives some amusing specimens of the answers obtained from candidates for admission : — Question : How many and what motions has the earth ? Answer : Four — North, South, East and West. Question : Decline I and you. Answer : 1st person who, 2nd person whome, 3rd person whomesoever. . . . We trust the State will heed the excellent advice of her retiring superintendent, and not remain long behind in that progress which can alone make the firm foundation of her liberties and happiness.

From the other side of the Rocky Mountains, we have to thank JOHN SWETT, Esq., the able and energetic State Superintendent of California, for a copy of the first Biennial Message of his Excellency, Governor Low, and for copies in English and Spanish of the Annual Report of the Controller of the State. From that part of Governor Low's Message, relating to education, we extract the following excellent passage : —

"To the student in political economy, and to him whose inquiries lead into the hidden sources of State and National wealth, there are no pages of history so fraught with interest as those which treat of the comparative progress of various countries, whose advancement has been hastened or retarded by attention to or neglect of proper educational facilities for the young. In Europe, England and Spain, Prussia and Italy, present notable contrasts when their progress is studied in this connection. Crossing to this side of the Atlantic we are told that one of the earlier Governors of Virginia, in reply to questions as to the condition of his colony, said : "I thank God there are no free schools or printing presses here, and I hope there will be none for a hundred years." About the time this remark was made the first steps were being taken to establish in the neighboring colony of Massachusetts the college at Cambridge, already endowed by the liberal-minded and far-seeing Harvard. How instructive is the field of reflection here opened as the mind follows for two centuries the development of these great States, started upon foundations so similar, yet developed by principles so antagonistic. Virginia's motto has been : the ignorance of the many promotes the well-being of the few — while Massachusetts, from her infancy, has proclaimed to the world the great truth that knowledge is power. The teachings inculcated by the experience of these two commonwealths, their relative progress in Christianity and civilization, in the sciences, and in the arts, their average wealth and intellectual advancement, unfold to our newer States no higher truth than that the public welfare is induced in no other way so thoroughly as by judicious investments in common schools."

Coming nearer home, we are indebted to Mr. ABNER J. PHIPPS, Superintendent of Public Schools for the city of Lowell, for a copy of the Fortieth Report of the School Committee, together with his second annual report. We are glad to find the school committee of this important city approving so heartily the system

of employing superintendents. They say, "In so far as this is a report to the citizens of Lowell, it is proper that the School Committee should express their appreciation of the influence and labors of the Superintendent. Results are already clearly discoverable that satisfy us that a wiser or more profitable thing could not have been done for our schools. These results, highly as we esteem the office itself, abstractly considered, we ascribe largely to a rare combination of qualities in the Superintendent whom it has been our good fortune to obtain." And we might add that the outgoing committee of the city of Cambridge, of which Prof. F. J. CHILD, of Harvard College, is chairman, express themselves as follows: "About some things the School Committee are not at present agreed among themselves. Of these we may mention the utility of the study of Grammar as now pursued, and that of the Grammar and Primary pupils passing so many hours in school. In a report which is to be signed by all the members of the committee, such subjects cannot be discussed. We all consent however to refer these questions to our successors. With these we would also put another subject in which we might perhaps come nearer to an agreement. Our schools are now so numerous and require so much attention, the unsettled questions pertaining to methods of education are so various and so pressing, that it would be of great advantage if a general superintendence could be assigned to one competent man. A man of great activity would be needed for the execution of one part of such a duty, and of large information and good judgment for another part. The duties of such an office would be for example what is required of the Superintendent of Public Schools of the City of Boston. . . . Such an officer, supposing him to be possessed of the requisite qualifications, would undoubtedly be of very great use. . . . While making the recommendation, we must call attention to the exceeding importance of *making no mistake in the selection of the man*, if such an office should be created."

From the Report of the Watertown School Committee, of which Rev. JOHN WEISS is Chairman, we make the following suggestive extracts respecting the High and Grammar Schools:

"The High School has been made only a more advanced Grammar School, while the average ability of the pupils has decreased by the admission of too many upon a lower standard. At the same time it has lost entirely its capacity to fit pupils for college. And the multiplication of English studies is so serious a draft on the time of the teacher that some of those which are essential, as book-keeping, to mercantile pursuits, are neglected, and the pupils cannot be considered by the Committee as in proper training for a business life. The town ought to support a High School that can cover all the ground which pupils may ever be desirous to occupy. There is a desire on the part of parents, which increases every year, that their children may be properly prepared to enter the Scientific School at Cambridge, or the Technological Institute lately established in Boston, as well as the college itself, or the various pursuits of business. The High School, as at present organized, cannot meet that most laudable desire. One, and perhaps two members of the school intend to fit for college. Where shall they acquire the requisite drill and information? Shall the parents

be forced to send their children out of town to school? At least two members of the school desire to enter the Technological Institute. The programme does not give the teacher time enough to fit them properly. It therefore becomes a question if the town will raise its High School to a proper standard and supply it with all the effective means which it now lacks, or leave a few pupils to be cared for out of town. The Committee desire to press this matter upon the immediate attention of the town.

The Committee have to complain that the efficiency of every Grammar School in town is reduced to the bare hearing of recitations, which follow each other in hot haste, as if it were a matter of life and death to get through with a certain number of pages of books in a certain number of terms. The idea of *instruction* finds too small a place in the incessant routine of hearing of lessons. The pupils have to get their *instruction* at home. The parents are obliged to take up the office of assistant teachers, in order to prepare the children for the formality of a recitation. Those having parents able, willing and at leisure, do not suffer; the bright children succeed in making a fair recitation, whether they thoroughly understand the lessons or not; the dull ones fail both to recite and to understand. Considering these things, the teachers deserve great credit for the accomplishment of so much. Instead of laying a greater burden of pursuits upon the Grammar Schools, the town ought to provide that the present corps of excellent and faithful teachers should have some opportunities to *instruct* the children committed to their charge, to *explain* difficulties to them, to spend time in illustrating rules and problems of every kind, so that the average of each school may be lifted to a higher grade of intelligence."

We return our thanks for copies of the Reports of Chicago, Chelsea, Lynn, Haverhill, Winchester, Charlestown, Nahant, Freetown, St. Joseph, and for that of the State Superintendent of Maryland. Some of these we propose to quote from hereafter.

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#### MEETING AT THE EDUCATIONAL ROOM.

FEBRUARY 3, 1866.

Mr. HUBBARD, of Dorchester, in the chair. A Practical Exercise was given by Mr. HOWARD, of Milton. Subject — Reading.

The discussion was then opened by the Chairman. The subject was, Methods of teaching History. Mr. HUBBARD spoke of the general lack of statistics in relation to the efficacy of different methods. He recommended that a committee be appointed to visit schools throughout the State and collect such statistics. Teachers now have to rely too much on their own observation, which was necessarily limited. They often felt sure that they had the best method when a more extended observation would show them that they had not. Every teacher should rely, in some degree, on his own individuality, but still, a knowledge of the experience of others is often useful. He believed that teaching was a science, and that there were truly scientific methods. To secure the best results, we must have the best methods. There are those who say that scholars should not study

history at all; that they will become sufficiently familiar with it by reading. Study, they say, gives them a distaste for it. In his opinion, no study was more important. He would have the words of the text book learned verbatim. He learned by question and answer, and derived no benefit whatever from it. It is impossible to make any practical distinction between a perfect lesson and a failure. He thought it better, therefore, to memorize the whole, and thus insure a perfect recitation. The scholar should then be questioned closely, and in every possible manner. He often put questions in the most obscure manner, to test their knowledge. History should be taught in connection with Geography and Chronology. He required his scholars to draw maps in illustration of their lessons. He would have every date committed to memory. He would also teach them different theories of government. The philosophy of history should also be taught. They should be taught to search for the motives which lead to different actions, as, for instance, those of Washington in saving his country, of Arnold in betraying it, and of the French in lending us their assistance.

Mr. HAGAR, of Salem, said that he had given but comparatively little attention to History. He did not, however, agree, in all points with the last speaker. He did not believe in memorizing the words of the text book. He thought the principal reason why children so often disliked the study was, that they were obliged to go through so much drudgery in learning it. He thought, in general, a very small amount of History was learned, for the time spent upon it. If the time were devoted to learning the *main facts* instead of the minutiae, much more might be accomplished. The scholars, too, would be far more interested. In teaching History we should remember that, at least a very small amount can be learned at school. By far the greater part must be acquired after leaving. We should teach therefore, as far as possible, in accordance with the method which the pupils must employ in after life; so that the work of learning then will be but a continuation of that begun at school. Suppose those present, following the plan often adopted by teachers, should try to study Macaulay's History by committing the text to memory, learning a page or two daily. Perhaps, in the course of a generation we might "get through" the book, when we should probably find that we had forgotten the first part. No one would think of pursuing such a course. Why, then, should we follow in school, a method at which our common sense revolts in mature years? Suppose a child, having read the daily paper, should be asked the news, and should declare himself unable to tell it by reason of not having committed the words of the paper to memory. Now History is a statement of facts. If, therefore, the main facts contained in a newspaper can be remembered and stated, without memorizing the words, why not those in History? He would not spend much time in learning dates. It was forcing scholars to live on the bones of History, when they might have the meat. Only the more prominent dates should be learned. If they were all committed, very few would be retained at the end of five years. Events should be grouped, and the scholars would then learn much by association.

Mr. PAYSON, of Chelsea, said that his own custom was to arrange the more important dates chronologically, and have them copied by the scholars. He



then took up Worcester's History in order, and wrote out a series of topics which he gave as lessons. Each scholar was then required to learn all he could about it from any source. In recitation, each one was required to state clearly what he had learned. There being a great diversity in their sources of information, a great deal of useful knowledge was thus made available to the whole class. Mr. P. then illustrated by an incident, the fact that scholars often committed lessons to memory without thoroughly understanding them. He once asked a boy to give an account of the battle of Brandywine, which he did with great readiness, in the words of the book. On being asked where Brandywine was situated, he confessed his entire ignorance. He had learned only the *words* of the lesson, and such was the tendency of the memorizing system. He then related another incident, to show that valuable facts were sometimes elicited by inciting scholars to investigate for themselves. A question was raised during a recitation in his school, in regard to a point upon which it is very difficult to obtain information. The scholars were requested to ascertain, if possible, the facts. The next morning a satisfactory answer was given by one of the boys who chanced to have access to an unusual source of information.

Mr. LITTLEFIELD, of Somerville, said that, as we advance in life, our early opinions are continually modified by experience. He had held, at the outset, many opinions which he now saw to be erroneous. Among them was one against memorizing the words of the text book. He now thought this the only way of insuring thorough work. He once studied under a noted teacher, who used to teach almost entirely by lecturing. The result was, that, although they had a very pleasant time during the recitation, the information gained was vague and desultory. He went through the Political Class Book in this manner, and the only portion of it which he remembered was the Grand Juror's oath. His own custom was, to require his scholars to commit the text. He had pupils who would commit a page in ten minutes. He thought his friend (Mr. Hagar) having spent most of his life in teaching the more advanced scholars, hardly appreciated the difficulties of Grammar School teachers. We are required so to teach our scholars that they will answer seventy-five per cent. of questions promiscuously put by the Committee. He thought this result could not be obtained without committing the words to memory. He thought it possible to have dates so committed that they would be permanently remembered. The trouble is, we do not recur to them often enough. By constant repetition they will become a part of the mind. He had the principal dates and events written upon cards and often drilled his scholars upon them. Memorizing was also valuable for the discipline gained from it. The idea is too prevalent that scholars are to be amused and entertained. It was a milk-and-water philosophy with which he had no sympathy. He thought the discipline of the powers a far more important object than the mere acquisition of facts, and he did not believe discipline could be acquired in any such way. He did not find, in his own experience, that scholars thought History a dry study. He thought they generally liked the idea of committing lessons to memory. Many teachers object to the use of written questions. He did not object to a good question merely because it

happened to be printed. He did not suppose that any good teacher would content himself with simply hearing scholars repeat the words of the lesson, without making sure that they understood them. He thought, too, that scholars generally understood what they committed to memory. The cases, sometimes given, in which they did not, were, he thought, rare exceptions.

Mr. METCALF, of Boston, (Adams School,) differed from Mr. Littlefield in regard to the frequency of the kind of instances just referred to. He considered them not at all exceptional, but very common. At a recent teachers' meeting, an anecdote was related of a class who were asked to define Geography. They gave the usual answer, "a description of the surface of the earth." But, on being asked how many of them had seen the surface of the earth, the question passed to the fifth boy before one was found who had done so. On being asked where he had seen it, he answered, "in Boston." After that meeting he went to his own school and put the same question to one of the best taught classes in his school. Out of a large class he found but five or six who returned affirmative answers; and, on questioning one of them as to where he had seen it, he replied, "on the map." We should often be astonished, if we took pains to ascertain the facts, at the ignorance of even good scholars in such matters. We are always prone to suppose they know more than they actually do know. Our aim should be so to interest our scholars that they will voluntarily continue the study after leaving school. A very prevalent cause of failure in interesting scholars, is a want of sufficient preparation in the teacher. He should not be confined in his preparation, to the limits of the text book. He should learn all he could upon the subject of the lesson from every source. How many teachers, before beginning to teach the history of North America, would consider it necessary to read carefully a good biography of Columbus? and yet one could hardly teach the history of North America thoroughly without it. What proportion of our teachers spend, habitually, an hour each day in preparing for recitation? A teacher should always be prepared to bring forward many facts and illustrations which are not familiar to the scholars. In this way an intense interest is often created. Recitations are often dull and uninteresting simply because the teacher is not half prepared. In plain English, *laziness* was, in many cases, the great obstacle to success. Children always like those studies best that they are well taught in, and they cannot be well taught unless the teacher thoroughly understands his subject. Many Histories, especially Worcester's, contain too large an amount of valueless statistics. Such books should not be followed implicitly. For instance Worcester's history of the War of 1812 contains many statistics of no value. To force a scholar to commit such an account verbatim was mere waste of time.

Mr. LITTLEFIELD said that he would not spend the whole recitation in talking. He preferred to have the scholars do it. They would doubtless like better to have all the work done by the teacher, but would derive far less benefit from the recitation. He had sometimes attended the Medical School, where the teaching was entirely oral. When the lecture was finished it was customary for the Professor to invite all those who desired to be questioned, to take the front seat. He had always noticed, however, that but very few seemed to have any such

desire. So it was in school. Most scholars will, unless forced to do otherwise, choose the easiest method of getting through their lessons. It was impossible, however, that such a method should educate them as thoroughly as one which required them to labor themselves.

Mr. SHELDON, of Boston, (Hancock School), said that he believed in using a little of each method. A really good book might sometimes be committed to memory for the sake of getting the language. He did not, however, by any means, believe in committing the whole of Worcester's History. In fact he considered it absolutely wicked to force a scholar to do any such thing. He had himself, made a History out of Worcester's, from which he taught his scholars. The main facts of History should be brought forward separately as topics, and the connection between them carefully pointed out. History is a growth, and this fact should be carefully impressed upon the scholars. English History should first be taught, and then American History as an outgrowth of English. The reading of the scholars should be looked after, and care taken that they have access to good books. He recommended particularly a book called the Victoria History of England. It was astonishing how much children would learn in this way if an opportunity was afforded them. He likened History to a chain. We must not only possess the links, but must have them joined together if we would use it. He would much rather a scholar would understand the bearings of an event, than be able to tell its exact date. Ten lessons given in the manner he had suggested, were better than forty committed to memory from Worcester's History. Still, if his friend Mr. Littlefield should come into his school and ask the printed questions from the book, there would doubtless be many failures. The teacher should always be thoroughly prepared before attempting to conduct a recitation.

Mr. HAGAR agreed in substance with the remarks of the last speaker. Mr. Littlefield had spoken of the necessity of fitting scholars for the High School, as a reason why they should be taught by the memorizing system. It was for this very reason that he opposed it. He thought that one half the time spent in committing lessons to memory, if devoted to a different method, would better fit them for the High School. No one thought more of discipline as an object of study, than himself. Indeed, he considered it the *main* object. He believed, however, that *ideas* discipline better than mere *words*. It is better to *think* over a page of History than to commit it to memory. A scholar while memorizing thinks only of the words. What a child gets from a lesson depends very much upon what he is seeking. If we hunt for partridges, we shall be likely to get more partridges than if we hunted for rabbits. The scholar who commits to memory, is hunting for words. His acquisitions, therefore, will consist principally of words. That scholar, on the other hand, whose object is to get the ideas contained in the lesson, will doubtless get more ideas than the other. The child who, in recitation, gives merely the words of another, cannot have gained that discipline which another has gained who gives the ideas in his own words. Scholars who recite verbatim, often ask what comes next? that is, what word comes next? thus showing that it is upon the words only that their attention is fixed.

There is no surer evidence of thorough discipline than for a scholar to be able to express clearly his own ideas in his own words. We, as teachers, should begin early to cultivate this power of expression. Nothing is more essential to success. We should do little, however, towards acquiring it by merely committing to memory the expressions of others.

His own custom in teaching History was, to give a subject, as for instance, the battle of Bunker Hill. He then told his scholars that he should hold them responsible for all the ideas contained in the book. He also encouraged them to obtain all the information possible from other sources. In recitation he questioned them closely to make sure that they had actually acquired the ideas of the book. The questions should be the teacher's own. Printed questions, he abominated. If they were used, the scholars would prepare themselves to answer only those which they saw before them, whereas, they should be taught to be ready to answer any question which may be put. He would have them examine the subject in the same manner as an older person would do. We are not satisfied, in investigating a subject, to examine but one authority; neither should the scholars be. We should teach so that the whole plan of study will not have to be changed when they leave school. The idea should be impressed upon them that they have entered a *path* of knowledge which they are to continue to follow through life, and that the better their start, the better will be their progress. The great object in teaching History should be, to infuse reality and life both into its scenes and its characters. Scholars often, do not at all realize that the historical characters, about which they read, were actually living men, such as they see about them. It should be the teacher's business to make these characters as life-like as possible. He did not believe that, in order to study *hard*, it was necessary to study *uncomfortably*. Neither did he believe as some present seemed to do, that a recitation was necessarily a failure because the teacher had the ability to make it interesting and pleasant. He had no sympathy either with the idea, that the teacher who makes a lesson hard, is necessarily a better one than he who makes it easy.

Mr. HOWARD, of Milton, announced the subject for discussion at the next meeting to be, "Systems of Marking."

GEO. K. DANIELL, JR.

*Secretary.*

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#### BOOK NOTICES.

Report of the Special Commission on the Hours of Labor and the Condition and Prospects of the Industrial Classes. House Document, No. 98. Boston. Wright & Potter, State Printers. 8vo, pp. 70.

As is known to many of our readers, by a vote of the last Legislature a Commission was appointed, to sit during the recess and take testimony and report to the present Legislature, on what is commonly known as the "Eight-Hour Movement." The Commission consisted of the Rev. Wm. P. Tilden, Dr. H. I. Bowditch, F. B. Sanborn, Esq., Secretary of the Board of State Charities, the



Hon. Elizur Wright, and George H. Snelling, Esq., and the result of their labors is embodied in the valuable and interesting pamphlet before us. The Commission was extremely well constituted, and was fortunate in the selection of its Chairman, who, now pastor of one of the oldest religious societies in Boston, was himself once a working shipwright. Every word of the report and evidence is worth reading. It concludes wisely, we think, against the enactment of an Eight-Hour Law, and it contains the soundest ideas as to the way in which the condition of workmen may be improved. In regard to the half-time system for the education of factory children, which was laid before the Commission much in the way in which it has been laid before our readers, it says:

"As our common school system is so thoroughly established, and as all our manufacturing villages have more or less a mixed population, the children of merchants, mechanics, and factory operatives attending the same school, it *may* be difficult (although the Commission is not unanimous on that point) to adopt the half-time plan in detail; but we may secure a part, at least, of its beneficial results, by demanding the same amount of schooling as now indicated in the statutes, every *six* months, instead of every *twelve* months, as now provided; thus doubling the amount of schooling, and lessening correspondingly the amount of labor.

"But with the view of encouraging, as fast and as far as practicable, the 'half-time system,' we would have it provided, that, in all cases where this system is adopted and carried out in good faith, the laws in the sections referred to shall not be considered binding."

And among the three distinct recommendations made to the Legislature, the following is the first:

"That a change be made in the statutes concerning the schooling and work of children in manufacturing districts, so as to give them twice the amount of schooling now required, or by adopting in full what is known as the 'half-time system.'"

We recommend this valuable document to the attention of our readers.

JAMES LOUIS PETIGRU. A Biographical Sketch. By Wm. J. Grayson.

"Faithful found:  
Among the faithless, faithful only he."

New York: Harper & Bros. 12mo, pp. 178.

An interesting biographical sketch of a venerable South Carolinian who remained true to his country, and to freedom. Judge Petigru was loved and respected at the North, and such was the weight of his personal character at home that traitors dared not assail him, and he closed his life peacefully, amid the din of civil war, a noble example of a faithful and honorable man.

THE ORIGIN OF THE LATE WAR. By George Lunt. 12mo, pp. 490.

In striking contrast to the above, is this book, by a person whose disgraceful course while editor, during the war, of that infamous sheet the Boston Courier, renders anything he may say utterly unworthy the attention of any loyal man.

**A NOBLE LIFE.** By the author of *John Halifax* (Miss Mulock). New York: Harper & Bros. 12mo, pp. 302. \$1.50.

We have read this book by deputy, and are told that it is a touching and beautiful story of a Scotch nobleman, founded, if we are not mistaken, partly upon fact, and is far above the common run of the ephemeral works of the day.

**WAR OF THE REBELLION; or SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS.** Consisting of observations upon the causes, course and consequences of the late Civil War in the United States. By H. S. FOOTE. New York. Harper & Brothers. 12mo., pp. 440.

We will not call the author "Hangman Foote" any more; for we believe he made a handsome apology for the outbreak which earned him that undesirable title. The speculations which form the staple of his bulky volume, are, as may be supposed, of little value now, and we should not advise our readers to invest money in them, unless they have a great deal to spare. But a small portion of the book is curious, and that is the part in which the author reveals the utter rascality of the individuals who for a time masqueraded before the world under the title of the "Confederate Government." We wish he had given us more of this evidence, instead of his worthless politics.

**AGNES.** By MRS. OLIPHANT. Harpers' Library of Select Novels.

Another novel that is worth reading.

We are obliged by want of room to reserve for another number several notices of other valuable works which we had prepared for this.

We will take occasion here to correct a blunder which we suppose all our readers have discovered in the title of Mrs. Gaskell's beautiful story in our last number. We need hardly say that it should have been *Wives and Daughters*.

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#### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

That we may not be thought to say too much against classical teaching, or rather against its *abuse*, we shall give in our next a practical article on that subject from a valuable contributor, along with other favors which have been some time on file.

We are very glad at all times to receive criticisms or suggestions not intended for publication from friends and readers of the Teacher. Such communications prove often valuable.

We have received no poetry which we think quite good enough for publication.